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# PAN-ISLAM.

BY ARCHIBALD R. COLQUHOUN.

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THE great part played by the religion of Mahomet in shaping the history of the world, and the extent to which it is still the guiding principle with a large proportion of the human race, make the question of the vital force of Islam one of the most interesting and important in politico-ethical studies. At one time, it looked as if the Crescent, and not the Cross, was to be the dominant power in Europe; and to-day the religion of the Prophet is spreading both in Asia and Africa in a manner which is not without political significance.

It is necessary to understand, at all events in outline, the character and genesis of this religion, which has several features differentiating it from the other two great moral and ethical systems. In the first place, Mahomet the Prophet preached to his little world of polytheistic Arabs the doctrine of One God—all-wise and all-powerful—a conception not exceeded in beauty by any other revelation. From the first, however, Islam was not so much idealistic and spiritual; it was rather a social and political code, built round the essential doctrine of monotheism. Jewish influence, especially that of the Old Testament, had much to do with shaping the later development of Islam; but it does not appear that the Prophet knew the Jewish scriptures. However that may be, the Mosaic dispensation forms the closest analogy to that of Mahomet, and it is impossible to estimate how much of this is due to actual contact or how much is merely the result of a similar cast of mind in the lawgivers and of similar environment.

Islam is not only religion but law, and the law is as essential to the religion as the religion to the law. Whereas the legislation of Christian countries is based on the progressive

reasonings of the human mind, assisted by the spiritual conception of Christianity, the Moslem law was fixed and decided by the Prophet alone. The principal orthodox authorities are the Koran—the “Word of God”—and the conduct of the Prophet. These two sources are acknowledged by all the Moslem world, except the Shiites, as infallible, just as all orthodox Christianity regards the Bible as the bed-rock of its authority; but, in both religions, the matter of interpretation has given rise to innumerable dissensions. There are five Mohammedan schools of interpretation which, recognizing not only these two original sources but two others, are regarded as orthodox. The five schools differentiate the Moslem world, and the code favored by the ruler of a particular country is that which has complete jurisdiction within his domains. Only those sects which reject certain of the orthodox authorities are regarded as “heretics,” a distinction which differs somewhat from the Christian definition, and Moslem heresies, such as those of the Wahabites and Babites, arose out of the mystical conceptions of their founders who refused to accept certain of the orthodox sources.

To understand the method on which the faith and practice of Islam are built up, it is necessary to realize that there is no prohibition to progress or change. Thus the most modern inventions and novel ideas may be fitted into the Moslem system, but they must become part of it, a process which is accomplished by finding reasons or justifications for them in the orthodox sources. The Oriental mind has no difficulty in working these out, and this elasticity and power of adaptation have been the most powerful weapons in the Moslem propaganda. In China, for instance, where the worship of ancestors—one of the most deep-rooted customs in the history of the human race—came into direct conflict with the monotheistic conceptions of Islam and Christianity alike, the latter refused to compromise and was nearly rooted out and became anathema, while the former, incorporating the family rites in its own ritual, continued to make steady progress. The conversion of the whole Malay race to Islam was the result of a similar method of peaceful penetration; and, in fact, although in its earlier stages the religion of Mahomet was essentially militant and was for several centuries inspired by keen fanaticism, it has accomplished a silent and peaceful propagandism.

It is unnecessary for the purposes of this article to enter into any account of the various dissensions in the Islamic world; but the two great divisions may be mentioned here, because they represent a wide historical split in the Moslem camp. The first four Caliphs who succeeded Mahomet were his friends and converts, and they are acknowledged by the Sunnites, who also accept as authentic the six books of Traditions which are the third orthodox source of Moslem law. The Shiites, on the contrary, deny the validity of the claims of the three first Caliphs, and allow only those of the fourth, Ali. After the death of Ali's son, Hosein, these claims were continued in the persons of the *imams*, who met with violent deaths, and with the disappearance of the last *imam* the claims were finally lost; but hopes are still retained of the reappearance one day of the last *imam*, who will revive Islam. This is the origin of Mahdism, the appearance of false Mahdis and so many conflicts in different parts of the world. After the first four Caliphs, those who succeeded them were little more than usurpers, having, in fact, no succession from the Prophet. The Ommayades of the sixth, the Abbasides of the eighth, the Egyptian Fatimides of the tenth century, and the Ottomans (who finally established their dynasty at Constantinople in 1453 on the ruins of the Byzantine Empire) were none of them legitimate descendants or successors of the Prophet.

In 1517, however, Sultan Selim I, having conquered Syria and Egypt and assumed the title of "Protector of the Holy Places" (Mecca and Medina), concluded an agreement with the then Sheik of Mecca (a legitimate descendant of the Abbasside Caliphs) whereby the Ottoman sultans were invested with the title of "Caliph," assuming charge of the holy relics which are the insignia of Islam. This title has ever since been the property of the Sultans of Constantinople, but how far it is now acknowledged by the Moslem world is a much-disputed question. The early success of Islam was exceptionally brilliant, but it must be remembered that the sixth and seventh centuries, during which the Caliphate was founded, were periods of great exhaustion and degeneration in the Christian world, and that the valor and virility of the Arabs, inspired with a new and lofty conception and accompanied by a toleration for which they have not received sufficient credit, made the hosts of Islam a most formidable force in world history. For a long time, the

Ottoman Caliphs continued on this path of success; but the tide turned at length, corruption and satiety undermined the Moslem Powers, while the Christian ones emerged from the Dark Ages into a period of heroic endeavor.

As the power of the Crescent waned, the Ottomans were driven from Europe and Europeans invaded Asia and Africa. The prestige of the Caliphate naturally decreased. Those of the Ottoman sultans who, in the nineteenth century, attempted to arrest the decay of their country by reforms based on Western ideas achieved no success, and were regarded with disfavor by their coreligionists and even excommunicated by some of the stricter sects or brotherhoods. Both the Reform sultans and the Egyptian Khedives, swayed by European influence, fell under the ban of these brotherhoods; and Abdul-Hamid, when he ascended the throne, had to prove his orthodoxy and freedom from Western influence before he could enjoy any sense of security with his own people. It took him nearly twenty years of hard work, during which he eliminated from his Court all those suspected of Western tendencies and frowned on the party which favored administrative reform. His most successful policy, however, was one of ingratiation with the devout among his coreligionists by his protection of holy men, sheiks and pilgrims. When there was no money to pay the wages of the army or court officials, there was still some for presents to these; and the Mecca-Medina railway, linking the Holy Places with the coast, has brought him the gratitude of millions of people from the ends of the Mohammedan world. The final touch was put by the success of his arms over the Greeks, which, announced to distant Moslem communities with Oriental hyperbole, conveyed the impression of a conquest over Europe. Even the victories of Kitchener over the false Mahdi in Egypt were turned to the glory of the Caliph, whose spiritual pretensions had been threatened by the impostor.

The claim of the Sultans of Constantinople to the title of Caliph was never contested, except by the Sultan of Morocco, until the time of the French invasion of Algeria and the era of the Reform sultans. There remained, nevertheless, a lack of sanction to Abdul-Hamid's pretensions which was now to be supplied as far as possible by the highest spiritual authorities. It must be recollected, however, that no hierarchy exists in Islam

with authority like that acknowledged in Christianity, and that the recognition now accorded to him does not carry with it the weight which it might otherwise possess. In 1886, the great brotherhood of the Senoussi, of which an account must be given later, received the Sultan into their ranks; and twelve years later they formally acknowledged him as the true inheritor of the Abbaside Caliphs and the legitimate head of the world of Islam. The event was commemorated by embassies from the Porte to various Moslem centres throughout the world, and for twelve months afterwards Constantinople continued to receive deputations of homage and congratulation.

The brotherhood of the Senoussi is becoming known, even in journalistic circles in Europe. Its name is continually cropping up in connection with affairs in Algeria and even in Nigeria and Central Africa. It is the most important organization of its kind, although several others exist and have existed since the eleventh century. Originally theological schools, these brotherhoods occupied themselves until the last century with controversial questions of interpretation, legal and mystical abstractions and cognate matters; but, under pressure of the French invasion and of European encroachment generally, they gradually assumed a politico-religious character. The founder of the Senoussi claimed descent from Hosein, the murdered son of Ali and Fatima, and had the right to wear the green turban, thereby fulfilling one of the conditions of Mahdiyyism. The key-note of the Senoussi propaganda is uncompromising resistance to European influence and a return to the early militant spirit of Islam.

The growth of the Senoussi has been one of the most striking developments of modern Islam. They have adopted an active missionary policy and have spread southwards through heathen Africa, while their organization has been framed with the idea of including and coordinating all existing brotherhoods. The Senoussi have established in all countries where the Moslem is governed by an alien race a system of occult government side by side, and coinciding in its boundaries, with the state administration. This occult government exists in Algeria, Egypt, and India, and its emissaries are at work in Nigeria. The Senoussi now include within their brotherhood practically all the Sunnis, that is the majority of Moslems in Arabia, Turkey, North Africa, Turkestan, Afghanistan and East Asia. The Shiites,

who predominate in Persia, are alone prevented by their conception of orthodoxy from being Senoussi.

The Senoussi had their headquarters at Djarboub, but some twenty years ago it was decided to send their official representative to Constantinople, and the venerable Mokkadem who occupies this position is even more powerful in councils than the Sheik ul Islam, who, nominated by the Sultan, occupies in the hierarchy the place of Expounder of the Law, second only to that of the Caliph, the "Shadow of God on Earth."

The question of the extent of the Sultan's influence, and the proportion of the Moslem world which recognizes him as the head of their religion, is a difficult one. There are dissentient voices, even in his immediate entourage, among those who desire radical changes in the political system of Turkey in order to bring it up to European standards of efficiency and progress. That the Young Turkey party is not entirely disinterested in this propaganda goes without saying,—there is little disinterestedness in any political life, and none in Oriental countries. On the other hand, a considerable body of orthodox and non-progressive Moslems, such as the Shiites, do not recognize the Sultan's claims as Caliph, because of the break in what we might call the Apostolic succession. Moreover, Morocco disputes, and has always disputed, the claims of Constantinople, and has pretensions itself to be the seat of the legitimate descendants of the Prophet. Therefore both sections of the Moslem world, the modern and the fanatical, are in part opposed to the Sultan's claims. His strongest position lies in the protection he exercises over the Holy Places; and, when this is remembered, the skill of his diplomacy and the wisdom of his policy become more apparent to an outside world which is too prone to regard all Oriental potentates as monuments of incompetency. When, therefore, we begin to consider the possibility of a Pan-Islamic revival, it is not wise to discount too freely any of the circumstances which seem to point towards a renewal of Moslem activity or towards centralization. At the same time, it is historically true that the Moslem world has never been united, even under stress of circumstances, as Christendom united in the Crusades. Neither the Moors in Spain nor the Moslems in Egypt, India, or Persia were ever helped by the Turks, even when the Osmanlis were at the highest point of their power;

and, in modern times, Abdul-Kadr received no support from outside in his gallant struggle against the French, and, indeed, he did not even secure the undivided allegiance of the Moslems of Algeria. Moreover, as Professor Vambéry says, in his recent work, "Western Culture in Eastern Lands":

"The proposed association and the united action of the various component parts of an ethnical body dispersed in many different climates and divided into many nationalities presuppose a cultural level and a political fitness which is certainly not yet reached by the Islamic world. . . . The historic past, ethnical and ethical characteristics, and natural proclivities have formed a chasm which will be difficult to bridge over either in the present or the near future."

At the present time, more than two-thirds of the Moslem world are living under foreign rule, and a still greater proportion if we include those under foreign influence. The believers in the possibility of Pan-Islam point to a great improvement in the cultural status of Moslems generally, but they forget how greatly this is due to the imposition, under foreign domination, of an alien civilization. In India, the Moslems resisted the efforts to Europeanize them, just as the Moslems of Turkestan, under the influence of their fanatical Mollahs, still resist the educational efforts of Russia; but a new era has set in within the British Asiatic Empire, and the Mohammedans of India are now in the forefront of educational progress.

The quickening influence, however, has been contact with Europe, and therefore it is impossible to regard this phenomenon as part of a purely Pan-Islamic revival. The same argument must apply even to the undoubted progress made in Turkey, where there are the beginnings of public education, an improvement in the status of women, and a general breaking down of ancient superstitions. Orthodox Moslems no longer fear to travel abroad; the ignorant contempt for all foreigners as "heathens" has given way to a more just appreciation. Even the superstition which grew up round the Islamic doctrine as to the reproduction of the human form has been so far relaxed that the Caliph himself submits his features to the photographer.

But, while it is incontrovertibly true that this change, this intellectual quickening among Moslems, is due to contact with Christian civilization, it must not be forgotten how much that civilization owes to the Arabs and to the earlier and more bril-



liant Moslem civilizations. Moslem universities were the schools of Europe in the Middle Ages, and the Mohammedan teachers of medicine, mechanics, chemistry, astronomy, history, architecture, and even geography, were like beacons set on a hill in the intellectual darkness of Europe. To quote a distinguished Moslem of India, "Europe stands on the shoulders of Islam." In the same way, we know how far China was once ahead of Europe, and both the Mohammedan and the Chinese civilizations, flowering early, were doomed to a long period of stagnation. Now there are signs of revival, and Christianity is asked in turn to give inspiration to its quondam teacher. The renaissance of Japan is a great stimulus and is used as an analogy, without any particular discrimination. It is too often forgotten that the renaissance in the Far East is not religious but national.

The main difficulty, however, from the Pan-Islamic point of view, is the character of the Moslem religion. Christianity is a spiritual belief and a moral code, and the Japanese, having no spiritual belief of their own, have adapted Christian civilization and grafted it on to their own moral code; but Moslems are bound in every relation of life, and in their whole attitude towards matters spiritual and temporal, to a definite and prescribed code. So long as the Moslem races preserved their militant character, so long as they were led by strong and warlike chiefs and lived a full and strenuous life, their religion was a vivifying one. But with political decadence came religious decadence, and this, despite assertions to the contrary, not only because the spirit of Islam was gradually overlaid with dead forms, but because it was essentially lacking in the elements of permanent virility. Considered from a purely material point of view, Christianity has stood the test of time far better, and is more likely to continue to hold its own because it allows the fullest possible scope for individualism.

The claim that Islam is equally elastic is one on which it is perhaps presumptuous to dogmatize; but the evidence of history is to the contrary. The prosperous period of Islam was the period of fanaticism. The possibility of reconciling all modern developments with the words of the Koran does not meet the case. This species of casuistry cannot conceal the truth that, under such conditions, Islam tends more and more to become the husk and not the kernel. We see in Europe the spec-

tacle, not unnoticed by Moslems, of one of the erstwhile most devout Christian nations given over to secularism or worse. "God has made these Christians mad so that Mahomet may come to his own," is the Moslem comment. But the wave of indifference and formalism which has submerged Islam also is not so easy to roll back, and, although the improvement in the cultural status of Moslems has led to a revival of their historic pride and even to the stirrings of national feeling among them, yet the political disintegration which has taken place makes any general revival extremely difficult.

One of the first *desiderata* for a Pan-Islam revival is a real centre. We have seen that the Caliphate has been strengthened with a view to providing this; and, as Turkey is the most independent Moslem state now existing, everything seems to point to Constantinople as the natural focus of all efforts. The pilgrimages to the Holy Places, instituted by Mahomet as a bond of union to his people, continue to be of value in keeping the Moslems of all races in touch with each other, and are used by the Senoussi and other organizations for purposes of political propaganda. But, as we have already seen, Abdul-Hamid is identified with the party of political reaction, while at the same time he is unacceptable to some of the fanatics of his coreligionists. Moreover, the political situation of Turkey is too precarious to admit of any bold measures either of reform or reunion, nor has it that national cohesion or vitality which would enable it to emulate Japan in the reorganization of its forces. The Near East has become to such an extent the appendage of Europe, and the cockpit of its rivalries, that it would be difficult for the most virile and strenuous of peoples to develop on national and independent lines; but Turkey is the home of a people whose natural ability and energy have been sapped by centuries of incompetent and oppressive government. Neither Morocco, Persia nor Afghanistan could conceivably be taken as leader and centre of a Moslem revival. The Persians, for one thing, are largely schismatics; the cultural level of all three countries is low; and all are equally dominated by considerations in the foreign policy of European Powers. Their political future is obscure, but one thing seems certain—they may follow, but they cannot lead, in any movement for the revivification of Islam.

It may be well at this point to attempt to define the aims of

the Pan-Islamites. Their name is as misleading as are similar terms applied to political and ethnographic groups elsewhere. Associations bearing this generic term are found to-day in London, Paris, Geneva, the United States and other foreign centres. How far their organization is developed in Moslem countries it is impossible to say, but there are nearly a dozen publications devoted to their propaganda, six of these appearing in Cairo. A distinguished French writer, M. Binger, who is also the head of the African section of the Colonial office, defines their aims as twofold, and more or less alternative. Either the wide and rather chimerical design of so reviving the religion of the Prophet as to restore the prestige and glory of the East (as compared to the West), or, failing that, to form new Islamic groups having as their aim merely the preservation of the Faith. The means for accomplishing these ends are to be the coalition of existing Islamic states or the organization of religious forces to work throughout the Moslem world for one or both of these objects. So far, the last part of the programme is the only one which seems to be actively realized.

Like all wide and vague movements which are not so much positive as negative in their aims, Pan-Islam will inevitably make itself felt in a number of developments apparently disconnected, but in reality united by the anti-foreign sentiment. This is regrettable from the point of view of the best exponents of Pan-Islam, who desire to raise the general level of their co-religionists rather than to place them in antagonism to their environment, but the anti-foreign propaganda is the most tangible and most intelligible feature of the whole programme. Moreover, the movement is one that will be increasingly difficult to control. The Sultan, inspired and dominated by the militant Senoussi, has undoubtedly set in motion some of the machinery which is provided by the secret service of that brotherhood. In the recent crisis in the Near East, he found himself between the devil and the deep sea, and could not have yielded the essential points with regard to the Macedonian provinces without calling down the wrath of his own people. The crisis was averted by diplomatic tact, and the Sultan "saved the face of the Powers" by what the European press euphemistically described as "submitting to the mandate of Europe." The interest taken in this incident has not subsided, and moreover the

most unmistakable signs of unrest are noticeable in Algeria, Tunis, Egypt, and even in Central and East Africa.

The spread of Islam in Africa is one of the most striking phenomena of the nineteenth century, and, taken in connection with the cultural revival of the Moslem world in Asia, is the feature in the situation which is of the gravest import. There are three currents of Mohammedanism which are spreading in Africa—from the Upper Nile, from Zanzibar into the Congo region, and lastly up the Niger basin. Christianity, which is only a feeble plant in these regions, is likely to be overwhelmed altogether, just as the flourishing North-African church was overwhelmed by the Arabs at an earlier stage of history. There are many thinkers, even outside the Moslem world, who incline to the belief that Christianity has proved a failure in Africa, and that Mohammedanism is more likely to prove a civilizing force there. It is a religion which, in its simplest form, appeals strongly to semi-barbarous peoples, and certainly raises them above their old level; but, in estimating the effect of this Moslem movement in Africa, it is impossible to disregard the evidence of history. We are too apt to imagine that, with the exception of Egypt and the Mediterranean fringe, the northern half of Africa has no history, but readers of Lady Lugard's recent book, "A Tropical Dependency," will be aware of the fallacy of this idea. It is more than probable that we have as yet only penetrated the outer shell of that phase of human development which has taken place in the Dark Continent. Recent scientific examination has exploded the theory that the extensive ruins of Rhodesia are the work of European or Asiatic invaders, and they now appear as relics of a lost stage of negro civilization, no further back than the sixteenth century. The researches of French writers have also opened for us the pages of North-African history, so that we know that the Soudan and the heart of Africa down to the Niger region were at one time the seats of great black empires, possessing civilizations considerably ahead of the contemporary European states. The civilizing influence was Mohammedanism, which continued to flourish in Africa after its period of decadence had begun in Europe. Coming from East and West, from Morocco and Egypt, the two currents of Moslem influence met at last on the banks of the Niger. Timbuctoo, the Queen of the Soudan, was the centre of a black Islamic

civilization which won recognition from travellers who belonged to the most eclectic and cultured country of the day. Our European ancestors seemed to the refined and learned Arabs more barbarian than the blacks of Negroland, and the fact that this civilization, however imperfect, existed with sufficient stability to maintain empire after empire through a known period of 1,500 years, in a part of the world which (to quote Lady Lugard) "mysteriously disappeared in the sixteenth century from the comity of modern nations," is so singular a phenomenon as to merit a closer study of this region than it has yet received.

The conclusions to be drawn from this half-obliterated page of history for the purposes of this article are not altogether favorable to the idea of Islam as a regenerating and civilizing force in Africa. The causes of its decay in Europe and Asia were equally potent in Africa and are well given by an Arab of the fourteenth century. As a political engine Islam, he says, writing of the Moors, proved incompetent to secure liberty of the individual, and the Moslem states were enslaved by their own Caliphs before they were overthrown by strangers. The relapse of the ancient Moslem kingdoms of the Soudan from a condition of orthodoxy, prosperity, peace, good government, and respect for learning into a state of semi-savagery cannot be disregarded in estimating the force of Islam to-day. Christianity may have failed in North Africa, but has Islam done better? Its recognition of slavery, which, although practised in Christian states, was essentially opposed to the doctrines of Christianity, has been one of the main causes of the downfall of modern Powers. The degenerating influence of slave-owning and the impossibility of building up securely any state save on a basis of individual freedom have reacted with sinister results on all Moslem states and made African civilization evanescent.

Nevertheless, the outlook for those Christian European Powers which have large African possessions and spheres of influence is increasingly grave. Sir Charles Elliot, late Commissioner for British East Africa, writes:

"Mohammedanism can still give the native a motive for animosity against Europeans and a unity of which they are otherwise incapable. Had Uganda become Mohammedan, which was at one moment quite possible, the whole of the Nile Valley and of East Central Africa might have been in the hands of the Mohammedans, ready to receive and pass on any wave of fanaticism."

At the present time, Uganda is more and more inclining to Islam. A form of Islam has overrun Nyassaland, and on the coast it continues to gain ground, especially with the Swahili. In detached groups the faith of the Prophet has reached the Zambesi, and there is a Moslem community in Cape Colony.

The vital question is whether or no there is a real integrating power in Islam. So far it has not evidenced this since the era of fanaticism, and it has been during recrudescences of this fanaticism that the power of Moslem states or peoples has from time to time reasserted itself. The bogey of Europe is the possibility of such a recrudescence occurring in regions where European control is necessarily weak in numbers and depends chiefly on moral force. France and England, the two great colonial Mohammedan states, are chiefly interested, but the whole of Christendom must be deeply concerned with this question.

So far as Pan-Islam, on historic grounds, aims at the restoration of Mohammedan prestige and world power through an attempted revival of "the spirit of Islam," there seems no special ground to expect any more startling development than the gradual modernization of Islamic states under European tutelage. Nor do the divisions in the Moslem world show any signs of being forgotten in this development. But a very different set of problems arises with the spread of Islam among the savage tribes of Africa. Pan-Islamites must not be too sure that the spirit they are evoking in the Dark Continent is one that will remain under their own control.

Here, then, we find the historic clue to some Pan-Islam aspirations which on first sight seem chimerical. What Islam has done before—a work begun eight centuries ago—may she not do again? But the leaders of Islam must not forget that, whereas in the Middle Ages Africa fronted civilization only on the north, she is now being penetrated from every quarter. The disintegrating influences are far greater and the inspiration of Islam has waned. It seems more likely that, by a too precipitate and too little controlled propaganda, the African natives may indeed receive from Islam a bond of union, but that, far from securing allegiance to the higher sense of Islam generally, the result may be to evoke a spirit which it will be beyond the power either of Sultan or Senoussi to control.

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